1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

scribe the progress of a boat in rough water, the hand dips up and down as the arm is slowly moved from one side of the speaker's body to the other. Shooting of a gun is illustrated by holding the left hand close to the speaker's face, the fingers close together touching the thumb. The other arm is outstretched, the fingers held in the same position and directly in line with the left hand. When the speaker mentions the gun being fired, he spreads out the fingers of both hands in a quick, flaring, movement.

An obscene sign frequently demonstrated by boys and sometimes by girls is made by clenching the first with the thumb inserted under the index finger. This signifies coitus. In dancing hand pressing is often used as an erotic overture. A number of conventionalized gestures are used in the gambling game, including the indication of number by raising the corresponding number of fingers. Other signs include shaking the head up or down in affirmation or from side to side to express negation. The arms are used to express size. The left arm is stretched out, palm sideways, and size indicated with the right hand being placed at a right angle to the appropriate point. The point where the index finger joins the palm is marked off to indicate small size; the inside of the elbow or close to the shoulder are points marked off to show larger dimensions. To indicate height, the arm is outstretched palm sideways, the thumb slightly raised and the fingers close together. Height is indicated by the lowest portion of the hand. Nudging may sometimes be used for communication as, for example, to demand silence.

Aboriginally the Kaska possessed no writing. The syllabaries introduced somewhere in the Athapaskan area by Catholic and Protestant missionaries were not developed in the Cassiar. Traders took the pains to teach a few individuals to read and write simple words, but only a score or so Indian men are literate and less than half a dozen women. Today most children of from seven to fifteen receive a few weeks of instruction in writing and reading each summer in the Catholic mission school. Adults set a high value on literacy and many parents express the desire that their children master these abilities so that they will be able to write simple messages to the traders, read bills, and otherwise help the older generation adjust to modern conditions. Young children do not often share these attitudes, but some young men, like Nitla, spend several hours a week laboriously trying to learn to write words and coherent sentences. Several times Nitla asked the ethnographer for lists of familiar words such as the terms for commodities, local place names, and stock phrases ("I am going hunting.") which he could copy when the need arose.

Simple journals, often little more than calendars marking off the passage of the days and months, are kept by several young men. They contain brief notations of outstanding events (arrival of visitors, hunting data, departure from the trading post, etc.). Sometimes the writer forgets to enter a day in his journal and then his calendar is awry. Excerpts from the journal kept by Harry Lang in 1940 are given below; the original spelling and punctuation are preserved. Bracketed words are the ethnographer's.

Aug. 1.th 1940 Stay at Lower Post, yet.
Aug. 2.th 1940 Start from Lower Post
Aug. 3.th 1940 At [Joe] place. We camp.
Aug. 4.th 1940 Start camp at Frances River.
Aug. 5.th 1940 We get Home upper [Old Man] Creek.

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212 Aug. 6.th 1940 We start for Lakes.
Aug. 7.th 1940 [John Keats] meet as on trail.

. . . . . .

Aug. 25.th 1940 We go to mountain for shap [sheep].
Aug. 26.th 1940 We stay at the mountain yet.
Aug. 27.th 1940 We go down to Lake.
Aug. 28.th 1940 Old Man [Wiley] and me and [Billy Barre] hunt moose Kill one moose.
Aug. 29.th 1940 I kill two Bull moose. and We goe home, for the camp.

215 Young people occasionally make photographic records with simple folding or box cameras; these are generally pictures of friends and relatives. The films are mailed to large cities for developing and printing. Great pleasure is found in looking at photographs, even after they have been seen many times before. Informants were also pleased to show a copy of the *National Geographic Magazine*, for May 1942, containing the record of the Albees' trip through the Upper Liard River valley and showing pictures of both deceased and living people.[14]

202 [1947] People communicate from one bank of a river to another by shouting; young men may also whistle. In the bush two smoke fires are said to be the signal for distress. Generally, if a person becomes lost in the bush, he fires a large caliber rifle and then waits for an answer. If he is injured, he may fire a number of shots in quick succession. Between winter settlements located as many as eight miles apart, gun fire is sometimes used for signaling.

212 202 In winter, if anyone leaves a settlement for a visit to the trading post, he is sure to be given messages to the storemen requesting additional supplies and a small increase in credit. These messages are usually laboriously pencilled by someone who can write, verbal messages being ignored by traders unless accompanied by cash. Notes are sometimes left at cabins when the occupants go away. Such notes commonly explain the reason for leaving and give the destination of the occupants.[15] Ordinarily Indians have little occasion to write letters. When they wish to do so, help is usually solicited from the independent trader in Lower Post.

Visitors between winter settlements, or in summer, from other parts of the area, disseminate news. Such transmission generally occurs at informal gatherings, perhaps while the visitor is refreshing himself with a cup of tea. News circulated in this way includes accounts of illness, death, luck in hunting, and the progress of house construction, as well as the activities of traders and other white people. Such accounts very rarely contain personal items unfavorable to a subject, gossip of this kind being either suppressed or withheld for more intimate occasions.

Property

421 Among the Kaska Indians, property—that is, those social relationships controlling the use and alienation of some subject matter[16]—tends to be of relatively little importance.

[14] Albee and Albee, *Family Afoot in the Yukon Wilds* (1942).

[15] Albee and Albee, *Family Afoot in the Yukon Wilds* (1942), 690. The specimen note given by the authors is very similar to ones which we encountered three years later.

[16] Murdock, *et. al.*, *Outline of Cultural Materials* (1945), 24.

6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12
Dease River

vehicle. Women as well as men drew the toboggans, a harness for this purpose consisting of one moose-hide line passing around the outside of the arms and around the chest while another cord passed over the top of the head.

Snowshoe types included the round or Loucheux style (said to have been preferable because of its lighter weight) as well as the pointed variety. Function determined the length of these appliances, long shoes being best adapted for a hunter's swift travel in deep snow. Small shoes served well to break trail for a toboggan. In case of emergency a man made temporary snowshoes by bending and lashing a willow pole, which he then filled with heavy babiche line. Children usually employed such crude snowshoes throughout the winter. The customary division of labor appeared, a man constructing the framework while a woman applied the filling. Bone snowshoe needles contained a concave depression at one end that served to push the line between closely laid strands of filling.

In any season the order to travel required men to walk ahead of women, a pattern that allowed them to break trail for the women and children. Blazes consisted of willow and other branches broken in the direction taken. Sometimes men hung moss in the branches of a tree, laid down stones to indicate a course, or cut the trunks of trees with a caribou-horn adz. A single tree felled by fire provided a convenient bridge. Occasionally more complex spans containing a number of poles provided safer means for crossing a stream. The tump line facilitated packing and pack sticks remained unknown. Baby packs consisted of tanned skin padded with moss. In this container the child faced away from the mother. When old enough to leave the moss bag a youngster rode facing the mother on the latter's back supported by a baby strap that was passed around the outside of the arms and tied in front of the woman's breast. Such belts were often decorated with porcupine-quill embroidery. Bark baby carriers were not made.

For communication between traveling groups, the Indians sometimes made use of smoke signals, a single smoke calling attention to a game kill. Also runners might be sent to invite people to the scene of a kill, young men being able to cover 20 miles by running in a single day. Picture writing or drum language were both lacking.

For water transportation the Dease River people relied on rafts, moose-skin boats (which occasionally reached a length of 20 feet), dugouts, and spruce-bark canoes. A raft contained the necessary number of poles lashed to crosspieces with tanned-skin line. Pointing the bow gave the craft greater speed. An earthen fireplace was often situated somewhat forward on a pointed raft, but people invariably spent nights on shore in the course of traveling. Two varieties of spruce-bark canoes may be distinguished, small vessels serving one or two hunters and larger boats for traveling. The bark was sewn to the framework with spruce root line. Decked canoes, sails, or canoes traveling in pairs could not be recalled for the pre-contact period. Men cut paddles from spruce wood. Rounded handles were denied for these implements, the informant claiming that the upper end of the shaft contained a crosspiece on which the canoer fastened his grip. Such crutch-like handles must have resembled the type in use on the Northwest Coast. A ridge was left on the center of the blade, the edges of which might be decorated with notches burned into the wood.